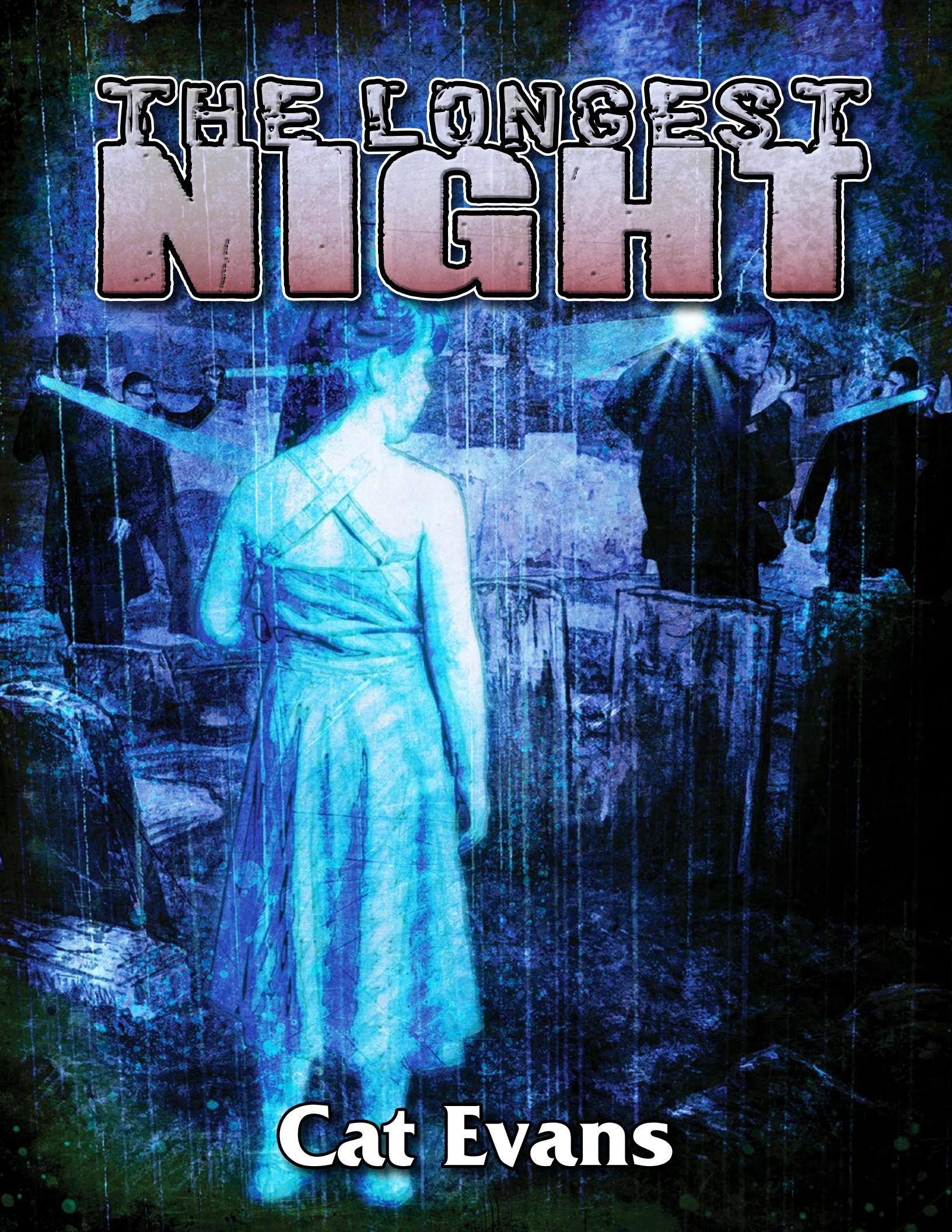


THE LONGEST NIGHT



A World of Darkness: Ghost Hunters Jumpstart

THE LONGEST NIGHT

A woman in a white dress stands in a dark, atmospheric setting, possibly a backstage area or a backstage. She is illuminated from behind by a bright light, creating a glowing effect. She is wearing a white, flowing dress with a belt. In the background, there are other people and some equipment, suggesting a performance or event is about to begin.

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The Longest Night

Ghost hunters are the unluckiest wretches in the World of Darkness. There's untold injustice and pain in the world and ghost hunters become the chroniclers of suffering. Some believe they're saving the world, others claim that they're doing God's work setting souls to rest; some grope in the darkness while others join distinguished, powerful organizations. But whatever their situation, their lives are forever darkened by their brushes with the restless dead.

In *The Longest Night*, members of a small town paranormal society decide to explore a nearby haunted house on the longest night of the year. It's their last chance to do so before the property is turned into a bed and breakfast, and some bad weather or limited equipment isn't going to stop them. Many have their own history with the supernatural, but none are prepared for what they find in the old house. Trapped by a freak storm and malevolent spirits, the characters need every skill and gift at their disposal to avoid joining the ranks of the unquiet dead.

This scenario is set up to teach new Storytellers and players all the core rules of the game whether they've played other World of Darkness games or not. *The Longest Night* takes three to four hours to complete, and works best with the pre-made characters provided, but it can be played with any crew of starting ghost hunters.

Storytellers and players who've enjoyed *Wraith: The Oblivion* will recognize some of the concepts in this scenario, such as Fetters, the Shadowlands, and Spectres. However, it's not *Wraith: The Longest Night* borrows some of *Wraith*'s trappings and terms but simplifies and stream-

lines many of its concepts in order to keep the focus on the ghost hunters and their actions.

Basic Rules

When a group of players assemble to play *Ghost Hunters*, most portray a single character with one taking on the role of Storyteller, who brings the world to life, portrays supporting characters and antagonists, and facilitates gameplay.

The Storyteller system, which *Ghost Hunters* uses, runs on ten-sided dice or d10s for short. It's the standard system for all *World of Darkness* game lines, so once you know the basics of one you're ready to play any of them.

To determine what to roll, a player decides what they want to do (such as "run away from this ghost" or "translate that Latin message scrawled in blood") then the Storyteller decides which two Traits seem most applicable to the situation. Usually these are an Attribute and an Ability, but some circumstances may use different combinations, such as an Attribute and a Background, though it's rare for two Traits of the same type to be used, such as an Attribute and another Attribute. Escaping a ghost might be Strength + Athletics, while translating a message could be Intelligence + Academics. The player rolls a number of dice equal to the dots they have in those Traits, and counts the number of successes on the dice. What die results count as a success depends on the Difficulty of the task: if the number on the die is higher than the Difficulty it's a success!



Difficulty Examples

3	Trivial (checking the weather online)
4	Easy (climbing over a garden gate)
5	Straightforward (expressing a simple concept in another language)
6	Standard (punching someone in the face)
7	Challenging (remembering a fact you learned in high school)
8	Difficult (completing a cryptic crossword)
9	Extreme (exorcising a powerful and malevolent spirit)

In this scenario, if no Difficulty is mentioned assume it's six. Remember the 0 on a d10 counts as 10. A character with an appropriate specialty (at least four dots in a Trait and an appropriate descriptor in parentheses) can reroll 10s and add any additional successes to their total.

Generally if a task has a Difficulty of three or four don't bother rolling, consider it an automatic success. If a character has all the time in the world, such a low Difficulty means that they will succeed eventually. A character should only roll if there's a real chance of failure. The flip side of that is: a Storyteller should only permit a roll when there's a real chance of success. If a character doesn't speak

Spanish, they can't just sit down and read *Cien Años de Soledad* in an afternoon, but given a few weeks and a dictionary they might figure it out.

For many rolls, players only need one success to achieve the desired outcome, but complex tasks may need more. When another creature directly opposes the player character's action (e.g. a character is hiding in a closet from a roaming spook), the player and Storyteller (rolling for the opponent) make a **contested check**. They both roll an appropriate dice pool, and the one with the highest number of successes wins.

One success	Marginal (getting some of the footage off a camera's damaged SD card)
Two Successes	Moderate (finding a specific person on social media)
Three Successes	Complete (researching a ghost's fully accurate genealogical history)
Four Successes	Exceptional (cracking a well-made safe)
Five or More Successes	Phenomenal (composing a symphony that'll be remembered for centuries)

The Storyteller sets the Difficulty and required number of successes.

What is a Spectre?

This Jumpstart occasionally refers to ghosts as "Spectres." If you're running this divorced from any of the other World of Darkness games, you can just treat the term as interchangeable. In **Wraith** and **Vampire**, specifically, a Spectre is a ghost (otherwise known as a wraith) who has lost all self-control, all compassion, and whose attachment to the world of the living has become something twisted and rotten. Spectres are horrific ghosts who desire nothing more than to spread pain and torment, and one of the key antagonists in **Wraith**.

If a task is very complicated or time consuming—rebuilding an engine, writing an academic essay—it may take hours, days or longer to complete. The Storyteller decides how many rolls are needed to represent this time period (e.g. one every hour), and the player rolls, counting up successes as normal and adding them up with each roll until they reach the number of successes needed. **Extended checks** usually require a high number of successes to represent their complexity.

Lastly if a roll has no successes and one or more 1s, that's a **botch**. Bad things happen when you botch. Equipment breaks, mistakes are made, and—with enough 1s—consequences can be severe.

Those are the basics. Other rules and mechanics are covered as they arise, with most in the early, short sections of Scene 1.

- Damage, Health and Death (**Scene 1: Perimeter Breach**, p. XX)
- Failing forward (**Scene 1: Perimeter Breach**, p. XX)
- Using Merits & Flaws (**Scene 1: Perimeter Breach**, p. XX)
- Multiple actions (**Scene 6: Safe Haven**, p. XX)
- Combat (**Scene 8: Emergency Services** p. XX)

As well as their Attributes and Abilities, *Ghost Hunters* characters have several other Traits: **Backgrounds** (rated one to five) cover tangible and intangible assets; contacts, connections, equipment, resources, influence, etc. **Numina** are supernatural abilities the character can call on, often at a cost. Not all characters will have these, but many of the pre-generated characters with this scenario do simply because they're a lot of fun. **Willpower, Humanity, and the Virtues**—Conscience, Courage, and Self-Control—have game effects. The most important being that characters can spend a point of Willpower to add one automatic success to a dice roll, but these Traits are also guides for roleplaying, especially in horror scenarios. A character with a high Conscience might choose not to leave a friend in danger, and one with low Self-Control might go off alone because they can't contain their curiosity. The Virtues are

a great way to encourage players to weigh up in-character actions not just as the optimal choice for 'success,' but as meaningful character choices and story developments.

Merits and Flaws provide unique advantages and disadvantages; some are minor, some profound. Encourage players to use them as a roleplaying guide in addition their mechanical effects.

Finally, you'll find occasional references to events taking part in a scene. A scene is a flexible unit of time: it means until something dramatically important changes. Until the characters leave an area, an event fades to black, or similar, that's a scene.

Safe Scares

A brush with the other side of the Shroud is unsettling. It's rare for players to feel the fear their characters experience but they should be open to the possibility; they've agreed to sit and play a horror game after all. That's not an excuse to be cruel, however. Some specific scares may be off limits for your particular group of players. This scenario features:

- Ghosts
- Darkness
- Assault by unseen attackers
- Loss of agency (for some ghosts, with a small chance of this happening to players' characters)

Warn your players in advance about the scenario's content, and if it concerns or upsets them, warn these players when one of these topics is about to come up. Let players sit out a troubling scene, or if it's a detail or piece of description you can gloss over, do that.

There's a real risk of player characters dying during the events of *The Longest Night*. This doesn't mean it's the end of their story; if you want to let them keep playing as ghostly versions of themselves, that's a valid choice but it may be traumatic for some players. Ensure it's stated in the content warning ahead of play.

Cast

Character sheets and profiles for the six pre-generated protagonists are included in Appendix One, while Appendix Two contains game statistics for the Storyteller characters the players will encounter. The Storyteller portrays all other characters from antagonists to supporting cast.

- **Rowena Gower (Spectral Matriarch):** Rowena was the first owner of Gower Holt and she has never relinquished her hold. She resents intrusions, covets her privacy and power, and fears nothing... except the presence of another Spectre in her home.
- **Henry Gower (the Last Scion):** Henry was the last Gower to reside in Gower Holt before Rowena killed him. He haunts the place still, tied to the world of the living by regret for his disappointing and mediocre life. Now, he desperately wants to be free of the house, and of Rowena.
- **Ella Grady (Ghostly Hunter):** Ella, like the player characters, is a member of the Ironbridge Paranormal Society. Bold and daring, she made the mistake of entering Gower Holt alone, and died by Rowena's hand. She blames Rowena and the characters equally for her death and given the chance she'll have revenge on all of them.
- **Electra Gower (Departed Sorceress):** Electra is one of Rowena's descendants and Henry's ancestors. She came close to exorcising Rowena; an ambition she still harbors. Her spells and rituals, once discovered, offer the ghost hunters more weapons to wield against the Spectres of Gower Holt.
- **Officer Wayne Guest (Unfortunate Bystander):** Wayne has the bad fortune to be called in to investigate a possible break in at Gower Holt. He's short-tempered, unpleasant, and out of his depth, but his life is in the characters' hands.

The Longest Night

To set the scene, explain for the players:

- It's the night of the winter solstice in a small college town in northern Maine.
- It's cold, snowy, and looking increasingly like a blizzard's rolling in.
- The characters are members of the Ironbridge Paranormal Society.
- Having just learned that the local haunted house – Gower Holt – has been purchased by a property de-

veloper and will be turned into a bed and breakfast, the group decided to go explore and record their findings while the site is still undisturbed.

- The group are meeting another friend there; a fellow society member named Ella Grady, Justin's elder sister.

Background

The Gowers of upper Maine were a bad bunch. A family of blackmailers, swindlers, and thieves, their only saving grace was that they were often too busy destroying and undermining one another to spread their poison further than the grounds of their own big, rambling house. When the family died out in the mid-twentieth century not a single soul mourned them. It's not clear who now owns their once stately home of Gower Holt, but rumors swirl endlessly around the small college town nearby about bad energies seeping from the house and dark fates that befall those who set foot on its premises.

The rumors contain more than a grain of truth. Gower Holt is a scar in the Shadowlands, centuries of suffering and misery suppurating into a spiritual wound. Disturbing it, and the Spectre of family matriarch Rowena Gower, is a mistake few live long enough to regret.

Act One: Step into the Past (90 minutes)

The characters arrive at Gower Holt, find a way in, and start to explore. They have their first encounters with the house's own ghosts, and the ones they brought with them.

A Word on Lighting

The characters have one, or at most two, good flashlights between them. The majority of them are using cellphones to see. There are no working lights in or around Gower Holt. All dice rolls that involve seeing things (noticing details, being aware of other presences, reading documents) assume a character is using one of the good flashlights.

Phone flashlights manage to illuminate a few feet right in front of a character's face. The Difficulty of rolls involving sight is one higher with a cellphone and two higher with no light, as the characters squint to see via the weak starlight that filters in through Gower Holt's cracked and dirty windows.

Atmosphere: Lengthening Shadows

If you think your players will enjoy it, have each player roll two dice at the start of the scenario, designating one as the 'tens place' and the other as the 'ones'. That's the percentage charge their phone battery has. Reduce it by 10% at the end of every scene. By the end, most of the characters should be stumbling around in the dark on the verge of panic!

Scene 1: Perimeter Breach (30 minutes)

The characters arrive at Gower Holt, pulling up at the chained and padlocked gate that blocks the private road to the house. To either side of the gate, a six foot high stone wall, topped with a crown of barbed wire, heads off in both directions. It's about 10 P.M., cold enough for the characters to see their own breath, and there will probably be snow before the night is out.

Have each player introduce their character, and say a little of how they feel about this expedition.

When the group rolls up, there's already a car parked at the gate: a rusty, green station wagon belonging to their friend Ella.

Local Knowledge

As locals, Zoe, Justin, and Michael know a little more about Gower Holt than the rest of the group. There are so many local legends it's impossible to untangle truth from fiction, but they do know (no roll necessary) that the Gower family mostly came to bad ends. Suicides, murders, jail sentences, self-imposed exiles to other countries — there are legends full of all of these and more.

The Car

There's nothing at all sinister about the car; Ella parked it here and climbed over the gate. However, players will inspect just about everything, and curiosity should be rewarded early: it'll tempt the players to send their characters into danger later on. The car's trunk doesn't lock, and it contains a chunky, high beam flashlight and a plaid blanket.

The rest of the car's doors are locked, though a window could be broken or jimmied open with a Strength + Brawl roll (Difficulty 5) or Dexterity + Larceny roll (Difficulty 6). A Perception + Survival roll (Difficulty 6) shows

one set of prints, about the right size and weight to be a small woman leading into the brush at the side of the road. They continue for twenty feet, then stop. A tree has fallen against the estate's perimeter wall, providing a convenient way into the property.

Balancing on the tree is easy. Jumping down into the dead leaves and brambles on the other side requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll (Difficulty 6). Characters who fail land awkwardly, hurting their ankles, hips or shoulders. They subtract one success on Athletics rolls for the rest of the night (this could be really important if, for example, something is chasing them...).

The Gate

The locked gate isn't an insurmountable challenge. Justin has bolt cutters, but if the player doesn't remember or the group isn't comfortable causing property damage they can climb over the gate with a Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 7).

Alternatively, they can climb the wall, though the tangle of barbed wire at the top makes this inadvisable. Climbing is also a Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 7, 2 successes; but reduce this to one success if the character uses a coat or blanket to cover the barbed wire).

Characters who fail to climb the gate scramble over but suffer a level of bashing damage in the fall. Those who try to climb the wall and fail cut their hands up on the barbed wire, which inflicts a level of bashing damage, and must subtract one success from rolls requiring manual dexterity for the remainder of the scenario.

It bears repeating: they have bolt cutters.

Taking Damage: In *Ghost Hunters*, characters can suffer three types of damage:

- *Bashing damage* represents bumps and bruises, minor cuts, maybe a punch in the face. It hurts, but it heals fairly quickly and it (probably) won't kill you. When a character takes bashing damage, they make one strike through one of the boxes on their health track. When they reach Incapacitated, they're unconscious. Another character can bring them round with a Wits + Medicine check, removing one level of bashing damage, but they're still severely injured. Any more bashing damage becomes lethal damage (see below); make another strike through the box so it's crossed out when this happens.

Characters can usually soak bashing damage by making a Stamina check. We'll come back to this when combat breaks out. In this scene damage is a way of failing forward: characters who fail a roll get to make progress, but they pick up some bumps and bruises along the way.

- *Lethal damage* will kill you; blades, bullets, broken bones, etc. Make a cross through a health box for each level of lethal damage taken.
- *Aggravated damage* comes from supernatural powers and some natural sources of injury such as fire. It's functionally identical to lethal damage, except where magical healing is concerned. Mark aggravated damage with a third strike through a health box, forming an asterisk.

The Road

A quarter mile gravel drive winds through the trees like a silver ribbon. It's narrow, overgrown with dying weeds and rife with potholes. If the characters take their cars it's an uncomfortable but not dangerous drive. or a cold but short walk.

The forest grows denser closer to the house. Less starlight finds its way between the dry, leafless branches and tree limbs reach over the road like anguished lovers parted by a river.

The Forest

Surely nobody would wander off the road? Not even to follow an indistinct sound that might be a human voice. Not even when that sound might be Ella. There's an obvious choice here, and it's the type that can split a group of players and have them standing around for minutes debating the 'best' course of action. Fortunately, Zoe has the **Impatient** Flaw; if the group stands around debating what to do, have Zoe make a Self-control roll. If she fails, she picks a course of action and follows it.

Using Flaws strategically is a great way to drive the story. If Zoe goes off alone, you've split the group, putting both at slightly higher risk. If not, you've introduced a roleplaying opportunity for later; how long will she put up with following the herd? When you use Flaws to push gameplay like this, it's nice (but optional) to offer up some reward as well as risk. The groundkeeper's shed and Electra's mausoleum, later in this scene for example, provide that reward.

There are trails through the undergrowth and between the tree trunks, some overgrown and others probably made by animals. There are thin streams, steep drops, and holes deep enough for a walker to break their ankle if they're not careful. Call for a Wits + Survival roll (Difficulty 7, 2 successes; if more than one character goes into the forest together, only the one in the lead makes the check). On a failed check, the character(s) stumble into some obstacle, but they're not hurt. They arrive at the house 10 minutes after the rest of the group.

Make it clear how easily they could have sprained an ankle or broken a bone. This is the first opportunity to underscore that the house, and this scenario, is dangerous to the unwary. And yet it does offer the bold, foolhardy explorers a couple of advantages over those who stick to the path.

GROUNDKEEPER'S SHED

Just before the trees end, the characters almost walk right into the rotten side of a small wood shed. It's spongy with damp and the door is so swollen a hard tug pops it right off its hinges. The small hut is filled with treasure: a table and stool as rotted as the walls, four mugs thick with green mold, magazines (Playboy and a few classic car titles) from the late 1990s, three pairs of thick gardener's gloves, an unloaded shotgun with four shells, and a ring of keys just sitting in one of the mugs.

Not that they'll need a shotgun, obviously, but should they take it, the shotgun requires a Dexterity + Firearms roll to fire, deals 8 lethal damage to mortal targets, and fires at a rate of 1 shot per turn.

ELECTRA'S MAUSOLEUM

The light from a strong flashlight penetrates far enough through the trees to bounce off a stone angel standing demurely atop a plinth. The statue is strangled with brown, dead vines, as is the small, square stone building behind her. There's no way inside: the front is covered over by a stone slab that would need a sledgehammer to bash through. A circular insignia is inscribed into the stone slab below and a line of neat capital letters on the lintel reads "ELECTRA – 1909-1938."

An Intelligence + Occult roll (Difficulty 6) indicates this is a **sigil of protection** to ward away evil spirits. It's effective too: if correctly drawn with a Difficulty 7 Intelligence + Occult roll on a door or entranceway (Difficulty 8 if drawn from memory), for one scene a ghost can only enter the room if it equals or exceeds the number of successes on the Occult roll with a Willpower check (Electra can bypass her own sigil). The sigil provides no protection if the spirit is already inside the space.

The House

The trees end abruptly, forming a respectful circle around a tall, imposing house with four floors. The front door is padlocked and the ground floor windows are boarded up. If the characters have the groundkeeper's keys, they can unlock one of several side doors. Otherwise, they can cut the padlock on the front doors, rip off the boards, or wriggle in through the cellar windows; this is what Ella did, as the characters can infer from a Perception + Survival roll (Difficulty 6).

A character that follows suit has the unpleasant experience of landing on a damp, slippery counter beneath the cellar window, followed by scrambling down into a pile of accumulated leaf mulch and navigating a labyrinth of ancient cardboard boxes and heaps of junk. Luckily, the steps leading up from the cellar are stone, so there's no risk of them giving way underfoot. They're enclosed by rough, wet stone walls to form a passage only a few inches wider than an adult body.

There isn't a set of keys inside, so characters who hoped to slip in and open the door for the others will be disappointed. And alone. See **Frosty Reception** (p. XX) for the consequences of this.

THE FAMILY CRYPT

A character with good light (i.e., a flashlight) who explores the cellar might, with a Perception + Alertness roll (Difficulty 8, 2 successes), find a small, stone door in one wall. Behind it is a narrow flight of rough, stone stairs, which lead downward into a flooded family crypt. Long stone plinths containing elegant cremation urns line the walls, undisturbed for decades.

A Perception + Awareness roll (Difficulty 5,) determines the Shroud is thin here: the Other Side is close. It would, in theory, be easy to make contact with ghosts here, otherwise, the crypt has no other remarkable features.

Weather Warning

As the first characters makes their way inside the house, snow starts to fall, for now, it's light: a few soft, fluffy flakes.

Scene 2: Opening Doors (30 minutes)

The characters explore Gower Holt, discovering fragments of history and traces of spectral presences.

Floor Plan

The house is large and, for the purposes of this scenario, left largely to the imagination. There are dozens of rooms containing a jumble of furniture and junk that leaves little clue to their original purpose. It's a maze of dusty corridors and puzzlingly placed staircases where even in daylight it would be easy to get lost. Most of these encounters can take place anywhere (or at least, in a broad region of the house) so don't worry too much about layout.

There are four floors above ground: the attic, the servants' quarters, the family bedrooms, and the reception and living rooms on the first floor with the kitchen, pantry, etc. at the rear. **Rowena Gower** is usually on the second floor, **Henry** wanders the house, and **the Staff** are

present throughout, gravitating to wherever the living are. **Electra** is in her mausoleum in the grounds, and **Ella** is active, but the characters won't bump into her until the scripted events of **Scene 3**.

Threats

It's cold inside Gower Holt, there's no power, and in the dark halls and rooms it feels like someone is always looking over the characters' shoulder: these are inconveniences. There are dangers, too.

The First Floor is relatively safe. The **Staff** (see p. XX) observe, but don't interfere unless specifically instructed to by **Rowena**. Insects are abundant, and there are rat droppings and holes throughout. **Henry**'s most often encountered down here.

The Second Floor is the most dangerous in the building. The **Staff** up here are aggressive, slamming doors, throwing furniture, and attempting to shove characters down flights of stairs. For now, **Rowena** stays in the Master Bedroom, keeping the door locked. The only means of entry is to smash the door open, which requires five successes on a single (not extended) Strength + Athletics roll.

The Third Floor was once the servants' quarters. These rooms are all empty except for a few pieces of broken furniture. The real danger is storm damage; decades of bad weather and some broken windows have led to rot trickling down from the damp attic.

The floors are unstable and anyone who fails a Dexterity + Athletics roll (Difficulty 6) while moving over them falls through to the second floor, taking 2 levels of bashing damage and attracting the **Staff**'s attention. If a character botches (rolling one or more 1s with no successes) they're stuck halfway between floors, unable to move until they succeed on a Strength + Athletics (Difficulty 6, 2 successes) roll to free themselves and drop down to the second floor or pull themselves up to the third. Call for the Athletics roll every scene if the characters are not under pressure while on the third floor, and every turn in time critical situations like combat.

The Attic is even more seriously damaged than the third floor. The Dexterity + Athletics roll to move around here is Difficulty 7, and falling inflicts 3 levels of bashing damage. Gaping holes in the roof let in wind and snow; at the end of a scene spent here, characters who fail a Stamina roll (Difficulty 6) have +1 Difficulty on all dice rolls using Dexterity or Stamina for the next scene. However, the attic is safe from ghosts: **Rowena** takes no interest in this level of the house and **Ella** isn't even fully aware it exists.

Henry's skeleton (his Fetter) is up here, quietly decaying in a corner. An Intelligence + Medicine roll (Difficulty 6, 2 successes) reveals a broken neck as the probable cause of death.

Frosty Reception

Once inside Gower Holt, the characters find the house unwelcoming: doors close when characters aren't looking at them and stick shut. They are, it seems, not invited to explore. These are the actions of the Staff (p. XX), falling back on old habits in the absence of instructions from Rowena. The Staff don't take material form but they're visible with Michael's ghost hunting equipment. They're ill-defined, vaguely feminine figures in the long dresses, aprons, and prim caps of maidservants from a bygone era. They're faceless, and each one of them has spectral black cords trailing from their wrists, which disappear deeper into the house. If a character tries to follow the cords to their source, the Staff disorporate, fading away in trails of damp, mildewy smelling smoke. Rowena is not ready to be found.

A character that enters Gower Holt alone has a worse experience as one of the ghostly Staff follows them up from the cellar. Their steps are audible but when the character looks around, there's nothing to see. A Perception + Awareness roll (Difficulty 6, 2 successes) gives the character a strong sense they're not alone; when they first pass a window, an invisible force tries to shove them through it before disappearing. They can pull free with a Strength or Dexterity + Athletics roll (Difficulty 6), contested by the Staff's Willpower + Brawl (7 dice, rolled at Difficulty 6). If they don't meet or exceed the Staff's successes, they take the difference in levels of bashing damage (see p. XX) from being shunted face first through a pane of glass. If they take three or more levels of damage, their weight rips the board off the window, providing easy access to the house.

Spirits and Scares

This is what the characters are here for, and there are plenty to be found: most are the actions of the Staff, trying to scare the characters away at Rowena's behest. Pepper them throughout the character's investigations but save some of these occurrences in case the characters return to them after finding **Ella's Body** (Scene 3, p. XX).

- Invisible hands gently attempt to remove a character's coat.
- Characters hear the whisper of rustling clothing, like an invisible maid curtsying as they pass.
- Recording equipment in a first floor room catches, amid bursts of static, the words "Thank God you're here! I need your help." *This is Henry.*
- Attempts to climb any flight of stairs to the second floor are stymied by invisible hands pulling the characters back.
- Doors open to admit characters to rooms... and trap them inside. The force holding the door closed sub-

sides after a minute or two, though characters can overcome it with a Strength roll (Difficulty 6, 2 successes).

- Characters hear movement in other areas of the house: footsteps in a room they just came from or objects falling and being dragged upstairs.
- A character hears Ella's voice calling out to them. *This is Ella, not the Staff.*
- EMF readings indicate significant spectral activity throughout the whole house. There are major disturbances: whatever haunts Gower Holt is strong and active.

Scene 3: Not Alone Here (30 minutes)

After the characters have explored and gotten a feel for the house's unpleasant aura, they start to uncover the truly dangerous secrets, and meet the residents on the other side of the Shroud.

Outside, the weather takes a turn for the worse. The snow falls harder and the wind grows stronger as it comes howling down the house's many chimneys. Characters who go outside now suffer +1 Difficulty on Athletics checks while out there and visibility is reduced to a couple of feet with a cellphone or a few yards with a flashlight.

Worse; the cars are out of commission. Rowena has dispatched The Staff to slash the tires: she's grown weary of these interruptions, and she'll ensure her uninvited guests don't leave.

Ella's Body

A character with a flashlight sees the sprawled, broken doll of a human body at the foot of a staircase; anyone relying on a cellphone trips over it. It only takes a glance for any of the characters to recognize their friend Ella, and it doesn't take a medical degree to see that her neck is broken, along with a number of other bones. A broken bannister a few steps up suggests that she tried to stop herself falling. Apart from bruises consistent with a fall, there are no other injuries on her body and no evidence of a fight, or of anybody else having been near when she fell. Even so, you can ask for a Perception + Investigation roll (Difficulty 6) to put the players on edge: the characters get the same info regardless of their result but if they fail the players will be suspicious and paranoid forever after.

Logically, when they discover their friend's body the characters will likely want to call emergency services. If it looks like they're going to do so, ask for an Intelligence roll (Difficulty 5). Remind everyone who succeeds they're not supposed to be in Gower Holt and neither was Ella, and they're the only other people there: they're going to be the obvious suspects

in a murder investigation. That doesn't mean they can't call the cops or paramedics, but it does mean there's likely to be a tense debate about whether or not to do so.

If they do call, cell signal is weak now that the storm is gaining in strength, and it's impossible for the characters to make themselves understood. They should end the call uncertain whether the emergency services are coming or not.

There are three possibilities for Ella's cause of death: misadventure, human intervention, or ghosts. Whichever the characters favor, their investigation probably takes them back to *Spirits and Scares* (p. XX).

As ghoulish as it may seem to plunder a friend's body, Ella does have some useful gear on her, some of which even contains clues to the house's hauntings.

Cellphone: Includes two voice notes recorded earlier tonight (see *Ella's Last Words*, p. XX), and photos of a few of the house's salient features — plus some research on the Gower family Ella carried out before her visit. Battery 28%.

Utility Knife: Ella has a utility knife. It's jam packed with useful features for the ghost hunter looking to explore, damage, or escape a hostile environment and provides +1 die to appropriate checks.

Rusty's Radio (Artifact ••): An old Bakelite portable radio. Once turned on, it does not shut off, permitting ghosts to speak through it. This presents a convenient way for Henry and Rowena to interact with the characters, without the ghost hunters having to initiate conversation.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ELLA?

Ella's death was fast and simple; she headed upstairs, Rowena took offence, and threw her back down them. Ella broke her neck, one shoulder and several ribs in her fall.

Ella's Last Words

The first voice note on Ella's phone was recorded about thirty minutes before the characters arrived at the gates to Gower Holt.

VOICE NOTE #1:

Well here I am, outside Gower Holt. Oh, wait... This is Ella Grady, recording at the entrance to Gower Holt, said to be one of the most haunted houses in the county. Hell, in the state! This is a record of everything I experience here, for use in a blog post later on. Jeez this is weird. It's so unnatural; I'm the only person who's ever going to hear this!

[SOUNDS OF BREATHING AND WALKING]

Justin and the others should be arriving soon, but I don't want to waste time. I'm going over the outer wall, then I'll walk up the drive and find a way into the house before they get here. I really don't want to be stuck outside when the weather turns.

The second was recorded about twenty minutes later.

VOICE NOTE #2:

[THIS VOICE ISN'T ELLA'S. IT'S A MAN'S VOICE WITH A NEW YORK ACCENT. IT'S EXTREMELY FAINT, LIKE HE WAS SEVERAL FEET AWAY FROM THE PHONE]

Is this damn thing on? Are you recording? Shit. If you're in Gower Holt when you hear this, I need your help. Okay? My name's Henry Gower and I need to get out of here. I can help you, I can—

[WHITE NOISE DROWNS OUT THE SPEECH FOR A FEW SECONDS BEFORE THE AUDIO CUTS OFF]

Henry

Henry wants out of Gower Holt, and he'll lie his ghostly ass off to achieve that.

Henry prefers to appear to characters who are alone or in pairs, and on the first floor. He believes that those higher up in the house or in larger groups are more likely to draw Rowena's attention, and he believes he's escaped becoming part of her collective of Staff so far because he hides from her. He's quite wrong: she ignores him and passively enjoys his terror.

Materializing is difficult for him and he prefers not to do it unless he has no choice. His preferred modes of communication are Rusty's Radio (p. XX), a recording device (such as Michael's ghost hunting gear), or a cellphone: he'll wait for one to be set down on a surface, then open the voice recording app and leave messages. If none of these options are feasible, he appears.

Henry's insubstantial, only showing up as a faint, colorless apparition. He's a cadaverously thin man wearing ripped jeans and a flannel shirt. His shoulders are stooped and even in death he has trembling hands and a nervous twitch. He's constantly alert for Rowena or any of the Staff and if he thinks they're around he vanishes abruptly, creeping back a couple of minutes later.



Henry claims:

- He's not the only ghost in Gower Holt. Rowena Gower, the original family matriarch, controls the house, and inducts almost everyone who dies there (and there have been a lot) into her faceless Staff. She's murderous, and the characters should leave immediately (**true**).
- Rowena killed Ella and she'll kill the characters too (**true**).
- Ella is already risen as a ghost (**true**), and will shortly join the ranks of the Staff (Henry believes this, but it's **false**).
- He knows how to elude Rowena and if the characters take him with them, they stand a much better chance of escaping (**false**). Henry won't explain how: he's not about to give up this bargaining chip by giving the characters a chance to figure out he's lying.
- More than one of the Gowers was a practicing sorcerer and some were mediums. In particular Electra Gower, whose bedroom is to this night impervious to ghosts, had a large collection of books on the occult. He never accessed them, but he's sure they contain rituals that could get him out of the house as a temporary passenger in a mortal body, or even in an object (**true**).
- There's no way to put a ghost to rest: the characters should give up on Ella and leave (**false**).

The characters will almost certainly be skeptical of Henry's claims. To discern whether he's lying requires a contested check: Roll Henry's Manipulation + Subterfuge and have the players roll their characters' Wits + Subterfuge. Subtract Henry's successes from each character's successes, and use the **Wicked Deceit** table to figure out how much they glean from the roll.

These rolls aren't a lie detector test. They're about weighing up words, speech patterns, mannerisms and hunches to assess whether someone's on the level or not.

The Spectral Matriarch

Once Henry's mentioned Rowena by name, the characters might recall more about her with an Intelligence + Streetwise roll (Difficulty 6 for the locals Anna and Michael, and 8 for everyone else).

Wicked Deceit

1-2 successes	Enough for a character to get a bad feeling from Henry: he doesn't seem trustworthy but they can't tell whether he's lying or just not telling the whole truth.
3-4 successes	The character knows Henry's making up at least some of what he said.
5+ successes	The character figures out Henry's not confident he can elude Rowena, and that while there was some truth in what he said, that's probably not the only thing he was lying about.

There's a skipping rhyme about her.

*Murdered her husband
Got drowned by her son
Rowena Gower
Wicked as they come
Blackmailed her nephew
And poisoned his wife
How many times
Did she ruin a life?
One, two, three, four, five...*

There's no deeper meaning to the rhyme, though it's all true; Rowena Gower is just an infamously loathsome woman. She's aware of the rhyme (even her own descendants sang it) and detests it. It can drive her into a fit of rage or convince her to appear to the singer, though she's usually the last thing they see.

There are also books about her: a copy of one, *Worst of Wives*, is near the top of a box of books in one of the rooms on the first floor. Like every other bit of useful information in this scenario, put the book wherever is convenient; you don't want players to miss a crucial piece of information because they walked past a closed door.

Development

By the end of this Act, the characters have a few different goals: get out of the house, with or without Henry, make contact with Ella, or confront Rowena Gower (foolhardy, but very much in line with some of the characters' goals). Most groups will want to do more than one of these things, and Act Two offers opportunities for them all.

Act Two: Deeper In (30-65 minutes*)

In Act Two, the characters take a more active role in the scenario. They've learned about the threats Gower Holt poses, and now they must decide how to address them — or try to leave. There's one more twist: Ella started out as an innocent victim of the house's ghosts but now she's one of them, and she might be the most dangerous of all.

* The characters may not see every scene in this Act, and that's okay. If they do, they may be short of time for the finale but Act Three includes guidance on handling that.

Scene 4: No Exit (15 minutes)

The characters might decide to leave, either to return with more information and better tools, or just to get the hell out of there. It's not easy or safe, but it's their choice.

Leaving the House

Outside, the snow's now a blizzard. Visual range is just a couple of feet with light, and inches without. The wind is deafening: communicating with someone from more than a few feet away requires a Stamina + Performance check. Every 10 minutes or part thereof spent wandering in the cold inflicts a level of lethal damage; the characters' best option is to stay in the house and wait out the storm. In the best-case scenario, it takes fifteen minutes to walk straight down the drive, inflicting 2 levels of lethal damage.

The best-case scenario doesn't account for the ghosts. The Staff pursue the characters through the grounds, and the snow doesn't affect their senses at all. The characters can hide in the forest (Dexterity + Stealth, Difficulty 5, versus the Staff's Perception + Alertness, Difficulty 7) but, as they may have learned earlier, there are steep drops, branches to trip over, and many other hazards out there in the dark. Moving slowly enough to avoid these pitfalls means the journey to the gates takes 35 minutes (four levels of lethal damage).

Going faster invites tripping and falling: characters moving above a slow shuffle make a Perception + Survival roll (Difficulty 7). If they fail, they take four levels of bash-

ing damage; this they can soak with Stamina at Difficulty 6, and reduce the damage by 1 for every success.

Be kind to characters who decide to go back to the house: that's where you want them, so reward them playing along. Don't call for any checks for them to get back inside, and don't inflict any damage. They're not under pressure here, they'll make it. Is this strictly realistic? No. Does it increase the odds of the characters surviving this scenario? Significantly; don't be afraid to look a player in the eye and ask "Do you want to go back inside?"

Don't Leave

If the characters make it to the gates or the front wall, things get nasty. The storm intensifies as they get closer, as if the wind itself is fighting to keep them from the exit. In it, every character hears Ella's voice:

"Don't leave me here! She'll make me one of them.... Don't leave me!"

If the characters respond, Ella isn't listening. She repeats the same words, rattles the gates, and tries to drag characters down off the wall (use her Strength versus the character's; she only affects one at a time). This is just an elaborate guilt trip – and a tip that Ella is not powerless. The characters can still leave – if they successfully make a Difficulty 7 Conscience roll to leave a friend behind to eternal unrest at the mercy of a Spectre that is.

If the characters still choose to leave, there's nothing else stopping them. They can check in with contacts, obtain weapons and better gear, and go back into the house if they so choose. Don't play out these 'shopping' scenes. The characters have enough Resources between them to get anything that can be obtained legally, and if they want an action scene where they go back to Gower Holt and burn the place to the ground, good for them! Alternatively, they can just leave and never go back: The ensuing guilt, failure, and redemption can make for a real strong start to a *Ghost Hunters* chronicle.

Scene 5: Ella (30 minutes)

The characters now know Ella is dead, but not at peace. What crew of ghost hunters wouldn't make an effort to contact their dearly departed friend and find a way to let her rest?

The characters have several options for contacting Ella: Laure's Antecessor might assist, Electra's rituals (see *Safe Haven*, p. XX) include one to call a ghost, and the characters have plenty of high-spec ghost hunting gear. While it will be more satisfying if the characters choose to contact Ella, if they don't, she finds them eventually.

Do remember that ghosts can't enter a room marked with the seal the characters may have found on the Mauso-

leum. When the characters make contact with Ella, they're vulnerable to the other ghosts of the house.

However reach her, she's accompanied by a storm in the Shadowlands. In Ella's presence, a room turns ice cold and recording equipment picks up gusts of wind and hissing rain. When she manifests, strong winds tug at her hair and clothes and oily raindrops spatter her face. She has to raise her voice to speak over the storm, and it increases in intensity when she's distressed or angry. Characters can make a Perception + Awareness roll (Difficulty 5) to notice the storm raging outside the house follows the same patterns as Ella's personal tempest.

Ella's confused, alternating between being angry that she's dead, and believing she's alive and trapped, and needs to get home to her family; she's got Christmas shopping to finish, decorations to put up, and any number of things to take care of. The characters need to gently focus her on the questions they care about and remind her that she's dead; letting her continue her comfortable ignorance won't get them any answers.

Conversation

Once the characters have got Ella to focus and understand the situation, she has several things to tell them:

- Rowena Gower controls the house and the staff. She introduced herself before she pushed Ella down the stairs and broke her neck. She'll kill any and all intruders who aren't family; Gower Holt can never be open to the public while she's here.
- Ella can't leave the house, and she's terrified she'll be trapped here forever. She doesn't want that: every other ghost in the house (except Henry) is a faceless servant attached to Rowena by ghostly strings she can pull. She doesn't know how she'll find peace, but getting her body out of the house would be a good start.
- Rowena knows the characters are in the house by now, and she'll be coming for them soon.

Concern

Over the course of the conversation, it becomes more difficult to keep Ella placated. The longer she's present, the more she processes what's happened to her and the more enraged she becomes. Her rage is directed primarily at Rowena, but she's angry at the world and she's going to take out that emotion on anything and anyone. She blames the characters for inviting her here, herself for entering Gower Holt alone, and the world in general for letting her life end so suddenly and pointlessly.

After roughly fifteen minutes of discussion, Ella's rage overcomes her. Her speech descends into repeated cries



of “It’s not fair! It’s not *fair!*” while the storm rattles the boarded up windows of whatever room the characters are in. Wind blasts down the chimney and icy hail pelts the walls from nowhere (actually from the Shadowlands, the world of the dead that sits parallel to the world of the living). The storm rises rapidly to a dangerous level of ferocity, throwing small objects around the room, and threatening to knock characters off their feet.

The characters can leave the room or try to calm Ella. Leaving the room is an immediate but temporary solution as Ella follows the characters, trailing destruction throughout the house, making it structurally unstable and far more dangerous later in the scenario (see **The Only Way Out is Through** p. XX). Four of the Staff arrive to subdue her, attempting to bind her in spectral ropes if this occurs. Without the characters’ intervention, they succeed (for now). With the characters’ aid, Ella escapes. No matter what the characters do after a few minutes Ella’s rage burns out and she disappears.

Calming Ella is more productive. This requires a Charisma + Persuasion roll (Difficulty 8, 5 successes), so is best handled as a group action. Ask all the players who wish to participate what their characters say, and then make the check: everyone contributes, and no one is left out unless they wish to be. Characters are at risk of being hit by fly-

ing furniture and junk as Ella’s powers intensify. They can roll Dexterity + Brawl or Athletics (Difficulty 6) to dodge while they attempt to calm their unquiet friend. Rather than rolling, assume Ella gets 2 successes. If the characters achieve two or more successes to dodge, they take no damage. Otherwise they take 1 level of Bashing damage + any successes they didn’t counter, which they can attempt to soak (rolling Stamina at Difficulty 6).

This is also a good time to introduce taking **multiple actions**. The characters might want to dodge flying objects and talk Ella down at the same time! Performing multiple actions is difficult; assess what dice pools each action should use (in this case Charisma + Persuasion and Dexterity + Brawl or Athletics). The character uses the lower of the two dice pools and splits their dice between both rolls.

Example: Anna has seven dice for Charisma + Persuasion and five dice for Dexterity + Brawl. She therefore has five dice to split between both actions. She’s more concerned with dealing with her deceased friend, so she assigns three dice to her Persuasion roll and two to her Brawl. She can spend Willpower to increase either – but not both – of the dice pools.

Bringing Peace

Once Ella’s relatively calm, she’s able to express herself: She doesn’t want to fade away, but she doesn’t want

to be trapped here either. She can't leave, she claims, when her killer's still in control of the house. She needs Rowena destroyed: utterly removed from existence. She doesn't know how to do that, but she claims she can't rest until she sees Rowena obliterated.

If Henry's present when Ella makes this demand, he advises — quietly but firmly — against it; Rowena Gower is a dangerous woman. She killed Ella, she killed Henry, and through the faceless Staff, she has the whole of Gower Holt under her control. Ella's response in turn is rising anger, complete with return of the storm and more thrown furniture.

Scene 6: Safe Haven (20 minutes)

There's one place in Gower Holt that Rowena Gower can't reach. Her great, great granddaughter Electra Gower was almost as unpleasant as Rowena, but she was also a witch; one who came very close to exorcising her ancestor's influence from the house before Rowena arranged her unhappy end.

Electra's room's easy to find. Henry can direct the characters to it, or they might simply stumble onto it in their own explorations of the first floor. It stands out due to the sigil on the door: it's the same as the one on the mausoleum in the grounds and characters that've already seen it recognize it immediately. If they didn't decipher it the first time, they can repeat the Intelligence + Occult roll (Difficulty 6, this time requiring 2 successes) to identify its purpose and function. The relevant information is in **Scene 1, p. XX**.

This room at the back of the second floor is easily accessed from a staircase near the kitchen and pantry. From any other part of the first floor reaching it requires running a gauntlet of the Staff, who make at least one attempt to drive the characters back downstairs (poltergeist activity, violence, and scuffles at the top of precarious staircases, as described on p. XX).

Like all the other bedrooms, the room is packed for a house clearance that never happened, home to nothing but a bare wooden bedframe, a wardrobe, an armchair and desk, and numerous damp, moldering cardboard boxes. Most of those boxes are filled with books, many dedicated to the topic of harnessing occult forces. One box is a collection of pulp science fiction novels from the 1930s though sadly their state of spongy, soggy decay renders them neither legible nor saleable.

The main benefit of this room is safety. It offers the group time to catch their breath, process what's happening, and plan. In theory they could spend the rest of the night in this room, but that won't help Ella (or Henry, if he's been convinced them to help). Characters who've

seen the sigil in either place can ward any room in Gower Holt against the dead, not only this one. The characters' symbols aren't as powerful as Electra's: hers are permanent, while theirs last for one scene. Earlier we noted that a scene is a flexible unit of time. If nothing is happening, i.e., the characters are using a safe room to hide from the story, assume the sigil lasts for an hour, after which Rowena or Ella immediately materializes.

The secondary benefit is that Electra's books offer the characters a significant advantage. She spent years figuring out how to neutralize her ancestor's ghost, and came up with two options: binding Rowena into an item with special significance to her, or invoking her into the body of a mortal and trapping her there.

Knowledge is Power

It takes one person two hours to skim through the books for useful information. The more people who help, the less time each of them spends, up to a maximum of six people spending twenty minutes. The characters obtain three different rituals, which anyone with a basic knowledge of the occult (one dot in the Occult Knowledge Ability) can perform.

The books also contain a wealth of lore on ghosts, covering their ties to the material world (summarize the information in **On Fetters & Choices**, p. XX), and how to navigate the Shadowlands (see p. XX).

Each ritual takes one scene to perform, and requires at least one participant. Each ritual's a group action. Multiple characters can take part and all their successes count toward the total. None of the rituals will work in a room successfully warded with Electra's sigil: its entire purpose is to keep ghosts out.

Possess an Object: A ghost, whose full name must be spoken as part of the ritual, is bound into an object that has personal meaning to them (a *Fetter*). While so bound, the ghost has no Physical Attributes or Appearance, but retains all other Attributes, Abilities, and powers (and so may, for example, move the object by means of the Unseen Hand power — see **Appendix Two**, p. XX). This ritual requires a Manipulation + Occult roll (Difficulty 6, 6 successes). A ghost unwilling to be bound contests the roll using their Willpower. The possession lasts for one scene, and extra successes extend the effect:

- 1 additional success: effect lasts one day.
- 2 additional successes: effect lasts one week.
- 3+ additional successes: effect lasts one month.

Possess a Host: This ritual is similar to the one to possess an object. The host must be human and willing to be possessed. While bound into a living host the ghost

uses their Physical Attributes and Appearance but retains all other Attributes, Abilities, and powers. This ritual requires a Charisma + Occult roll (Difficulty 7, 8 successes). A ghost unwilling to be bound contests the roll using their Willpower. The possession lasts for one scene, and extra successes extend the effect:

- 1 additional success: effect lasts one day.
- 2 additional successes: effect lasts three days.
- 3+ additional successes: effect lasts one week.

Call up a Ghost: This ritual compels a ghost to manifest within a properly drawn ritual circle. It requires the ghost's full name and an object with personal meaning for them (a *Fetter*). The ghost cannot use any powers while they're within the circle but is otherwise under no restrictions. This ritual requires a Charisma + Occult roll (Difficulty 7, 8 successes). A ghost unwilling to be bound contests the roll using their Willpower. The possession lasts for one scene.

For this ritual to be effective, the person called must be a restless spirit; the majority of those who die dissipate into nothingness, or go somewhere they can't be pulled back from. Whether the ritual can call up any specific dead person who isn't known to exist as a ghost is at the Storyteller's discretion. If the characters do summon other assistance from beyond the grave, use the same game Traits as for Ella (p. XX), without her special ability.

Calling Up Electra

The obvious choices are to call up Rowena or Ella, but characters can also call up the ghost of Electra Gower herself. She usually confines herself to the Mausoleum, preferring to ignore Rowena (the house isn't big enough for the both of them), but the Ritual of Calling could bring her into the house and give the opportunity and some allies she'd gladly go to war with her ancestor. She's not as powerful as the Spectral Matriarch herself, but she's a lot more useful than Henry.

Electra's not interested in helping the characters escape, only in convincing them to fight Rowena alongside her. This is very much swallowing a spider to catch a fly: if Electra defeats Rowena, she'll take control of Gower Holt herself, which is really only kicking the problem down the road. On the other hand, a future problem could be an improvement over an immediate one.

Because of her powers, Electra doesn't need a ritual to possess a body, under certain conditions. If a living person dies in the same room as her, Electra slips inside their skin at the moment of death and the body becomes hers. This is one way of allowing a player to continue participating in the scenario if their character dies; it's up to them how closely they stick to Electra's stated goals.

Modifying Rolls

The rituals are powerful, and the rolls to make them function are correspondingly difficult. A character working alone, making a single roll, is unlikely to succeed. This is especially true if the target of the ritual is resistant. Characters working together, all rolling dice, have a major advantage. Remind players, that relevant Specialties in an Ability (noted in parentheses next to it on the character sheet) allow a character to reroll any 10's and try for another success. Plus, spending a point of Willpower adds an additional automatic success to the roll. These rituals are designed to be challenging, but put a lot of power in the hands of the player characters.

Development

By the end of Act Two, the characters understand that Ella and Rowena are equally dangerous, both to them and future visitors to Gower Holt, and have been given some tools to deal with them.

Act Three: The End Is Near (100 minutes)

Now that the characters understand their situation, it's time to take action. This part of the scenario puts control largely in the characters' hands. There are some scripted events in the form of at least one encounter each with Rowena and Ella, to offer them a chance to negotiate or pick a side. There's also an optional Scene (Scene 8) that introduces another complication via the arrival of a police officer: if you're short on time this is the scene to cut.

Scene 7: Rowena (20 minutes)

Rowena's done with observing these interlopers in her house, and is ready to act. She wants what she's always wanted: to be left alone to rule her domain, and to punish those who disturb her peace. She's already murdered one mortal tonight, and she's fully prepared to hurt some more. She's especially aggrieved the characters have brought Ella into her home: a newly dead ghost that she can't seem to tame.

First Encounter

Rowena manifests on the stairs, in the master bedroom, or somewhere similarly grand. She appears almost solid and indeed, were the characters to touch her they would feel mild resistance, as if they were passing their hand through thick, damp fog. Not that Rowena Gower is inviting the characters to touch her.

She appears as a handsome, statuesque woman in Edwardian mourning wear; which is to say a heavy, black dress ornamented with jet beads and black lace, and a small black hat. The hat casts a shadow over her face, masking everything except a cruel, saw-toothed smile and the occasional glimpse of wide, white eyes. Black strands of shadow stretch away from her where they eventually connect to the Staff.

If the characters flee, hide, or move to attack her she holds up a hand and commands them to stop. A Perception + Empathy roll (Difficulty 6) indicates that she doesn't mean any harm, at least for the moment.

Rowena wants to talk about Ella; she blames the characters for bringing Ella into her home and expresses her displeasure that she'll be forced to deal with their "emotionally disturbed friend." Her offer is plain: take Ella away or put her to rest and Rowena will allow the group to leave alive. Fail to do so, and she'll destroy Ella and the ghost hunters. Rowena acts as though this would be trivial for her, but a Wits + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 7, 3 successes) indicates she's not as confident of overcoming Ella as she makes out.

If asked, Rowena tells the group the best way to deal with Ella would be to learn who, or what, is "maintaining her attachment to the world of the living," and destroy it.

Second Chance

When other action lulls, Rowena returns to the characters. In the time between heartbeats she appears directly beside one of them. Ella's torment is ongoing; she continues to wail and rage while the blizzard outside continues unabated. Rowena informs the characters, with cold and focused anger, that Ella is, if not causing the storm, making it worse. If she's this powerful and dangerous now, she's only going to become more of a threat.

Rowena argues that if the characters don't know how to bring her peace, the best thing they can do is put her out of her misery. This time it's plainly apparent that Rowena fears Ella, at least a little. She gives the group an ultimatum: deal with Ella, immediately, or she will. And it won't end well for the characters.

Home Turf Advantage

Getting Rowena to manifest with Mortal Necromancy is much harder than doing so to Ella. These powers work on Rowena for a minute, not a scene, and she can spend a point of Willpower to end their effects at any point. "Killing" her while she's corporeal doesn't make her any more dangerous, however: she's already a Spectre, and things don't really get worse from there. Nor does she haunt the character that killed her; they're just not that important to her.

If the characters attack Rowena, however ineffectively, she summons three of the Staff to restrain the most aggressive characters.

On Fetters and Choices

The only permanent way to deal with Rowena is to destroy her Fetter. Thanks to media portrayals and folklore many ghost hunters believe — correctly — that ghosts are tied to particular locations, objects, or people who mattered to them when they were alive. An Intelligence + Occult roll (Difficulty 6) reminds a character of this. Alternatively, Zoe's Divination allows the player to ask, and receive a clear answer to, a question such as "how do we banish Rowena forever?" In the absolute worst case, if characters can't access this information through their own abilities, remind them (if they have read them) that Electra's rituals specifically call for a meaningful object into which to bind a ghost.

Rowena's only Fetter, into which she invests all of her focus and passion, is Gower Holt itself. Destroy the house, and she's destroyed too. The same goes for Ella's Fetter, Justin, but the characters are unlikely to murder one of their own merely to be rid of her. Most ghosts possess more than one tie to the world of the living, but the ones in this scenario have one each for ease of use.

Damaging or even threatening a Fetter makes most ghosts compliant: They know full well that destroying their Fetter destroys them too. This is true for Rowena: without Gower Holt, she's nothing. However, the characters aren't the first people to threaten her: she has to believe they can credibly destroy the house. Fire won't take hold in a blizzard, and what other means do they have?

The answer is Ella: Ella's personal tempest could tear the house apart. Essentially, the characters need to decide which fate is worse: Asking Rowena to help them subdue Ella, and then having to deal with her; or using Ella to destroy Rowena, creating a Spectre in the process?

Scene 8: Emergency Services (20 minutes)

Either because the characters called them or because someone reported the car parked outside Gower Holt's gates, the emergency services show up. Even if the characters tried to call paramedics (perhaps hoping Ella wasn't beyond help), what they get is a cop. This is the World of Darkness and the authorities exist to break up trouble, not offer help.

Officer Wayne Guest is in a foul mood; there's a blizzard raging and he'd rather be riding it out somewhere warm with a cup of coffee, rather than dealing with what he assumes will be a bunch of drunken high school kids.

Officer Guest is in his fifties, with gray-blond stubble on his head and cheeks, and looks like two hundred pounds of sausage meat in a 90-pound bag, shoved into a police uniform.

He walks a circuit around the house when he arrives, looking for the characters' entry point. If the front door is open, he checks the outside anyway. If it's not, once he's completed his circuit he returns to the front door and knocks, demanding anyone inside "open up you little shits, or you're going to jail." He only shimmies in through the cellar window if he's not granted access. If he has to go looking for the characters, he curses and swears as he makes his way through the house, flashlight sweeping across empty rooms. By the time he finds them, he's heard Ella's howls of rage and caught a glimpse of the Staff: he's spooked, and it only makes him angrier and less sympathetic to the characters.

Characters might:

- Hide from Guest with a Dexterity + Stealth roll (Difficulty 5) contested by his Perception + Alertness (5 dice, Difficulty 7).
- Convince him they have a right to be in the property, with a Charisma + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 7, 3 successes). Treat any dots of Influence the character has as automatic successes on the roll.
- Intimidate him into leaving and taking no further action with a Manipulation + Intimidation roll (Difficulty 6). Threats of physical harm mean the roll requires three successes (Guest is the one with the gun, after all). Threats of social consequences (e.g. complaining to Guest's superiors, accusing him of some kind of misconduct, making his life hard in any way) require one success to be effective.
- Hurt him. Like every other human being, 7 levels of bashing damage renders Guest unconscious. Seven levels of lethal damage kills him. Hurting Guest might be the characters' first taste of combat, and it might be useful practice before Scenes 9 and 10.

Combat

Combat in Ghost Hunters plays out in *action turns*. The order in which characters take their actions is determined by *initiative*. The time between actions is measured in seconds and to those embroiled in it combat is chaos, but initiative abstracts this in a way that streamlines play. An action turn has four steps:

1. Determine initiative. Each player rolls 1d10 and adds their initiative rating (Dexterity + Wits) each turn. The Storyteller rolls for all allies and antagonists (having them all act on the same initiative makes things very simple).

2. Take actions. In descending order of initiative, each character declares what they're doing. This doesn't have to be an attack: taking cover, administering first aid, begging someone to stop shooting, or trying to read a book while a firefight rages overhead are all valid actions. Generally speaking, characters get to do **one thing requiring a dice roll**. Yelling a few words, grabbing a convenient weapon, and other minor acts don't count. Moving, as long as it's a distance a human being can reasonably cover in a few seconds (roughly 20 yards per turn), doesn't count either.

Decide on the right Attribute + Ability combo and roll the dice.

Attacks use Dexterity + Brawl, Firearms, or Melee.

Dodging uses Dexterity + Athletics or Dexterity + Brawl. The rules assume everyone's trying not to get hit: that's why there's an attack roll. Rolling to dodge represents a character spending their entire turn doing nothing but trying not to get hurt. Every success on a dodge roll subtracts one success from an attack roll.

If a character wants to do **more than one thing** (e.g., attack and dodge), see **multiple actions**, p. XX. If a character is **only** dodging and needs to avoid multiple attacks (called a **desperate dodge**), that's slightly easier: they roll their full dice pool against the first attack, and subtract one die for each subsequent attack.

3. Resolve outcomes. Figure out who hit, who dodged, who managed to slap a Band-Aid on a bullet wound. Roll damage. Remember characters can soak bashing damage by rolling their Stamina at Difficulty 6 and subtracting one level of damage per success.

4. Summarize the scene. Provide a quick round up of what happened to make sure everyone understands the situation and can figure out what they want to do next (i.e. "Michael got shot, Laure has Guest in a headlock and Justin whales on him while Anna yells at everyone to stop fighting").

Repeat until combat is resolved. This only rarely means a fight to the death: people get hurt and stop fighting, de-escalate, achieve their objectives, or try to run. Guest does so the first time he takes lethal damage, leaving the house and calling for backup (see **Otherwise**), or he tries to bargain if unable. Try to limit combat to three turns at most to keep the action flowing.

Otherwise...

If the characters don't do any of these things, Guest arrests them. He can't get all six of the characters into his patrol car so has to call for backup. Thanks to the storm, it takes several tries to get through, then he has to wait for support to arrive. It shows up at the end of **Scene 10**, as is dramatically appropriate, and until then Guest is an unpleasant liability: he doesn't believe in ghosts, doesn't

approve of vandalism or trespassing, and thinks he's the authority figure in the current situation.

Henry

Henry wants a body; Officer Guest could provide one. Henry wheedles, pleads, and cajoles the characters to convince them to let him 'borrow' Guest if given the opportunity. It's only temporary, he insists, and he just wants out of the house. It would solve all their problems; he can, as Guest, ensure no more cops show up tonight or ever. He just needs them to perform the ritual.

Henry is actually significantly more useful with Guest's body. He's just a man with a gun, but that's better than a man without a body.

Scene 9: Goodbye, Ella (30 minutes)

As the night wears on, Ella's anguish and rage overcomes her, and she's ready to tear this place down.

If not subdued, Ella will bring down Gower Holt. This solves one of the characters' problems: it destroys Rowena Gower, which in turn destroys the Staff. If the characters realize this, they might choose to push Ella even harder; it's easy, and it'll work. Doing so calls for a Conscience roll (Difficulty 8). If they fail, they lose a point of Conscience and

thus a point of Humanity permanently, and that makes their lives much more difficult when they have to forge through the Shadowlands to escape Gower Holt in **Scene 10**.

Scene of the Crime

When the characters next pass the staircase where Ella died, her spirit manifests there. Ella sits on the steps, staring up toward the darkness of the second floor. "It's not fair," she murmurs to herself, over and over.

When she notices the characters, she focuses on them. She knows now that she's dead and she wants to take the rest of the Ironbridge Paranormal Society down with her. The scene begins similarly to **Scene 5: Ella** (pg. XX) but this time there's no calming her. She intentionally tries to hurt the characters, ripping poles from the banisters and flinging them like spears, yanking up floorboards to assault them with, and otherwise bring their lives to an end. Outside, the storm's so intense it tears boards off the house's windows and tears apart the roof. When it batters against the walls, bricks crumble and fall away.

The characters have a matter of seconds to interact with Ella; not enough time to restrain, fight, or otherwise interfere with her. For this brief moment, the Storyteller has control of the narrative. Ella screams, the pain in her voice dealing four levels of bashing damage to everyone in



the house who can hear it. Characters soak this damage with Willpower, rather than Stamina. She tears open the air itself, and it parts like a tissue paper. Beyond is a world of shadows and ash, a storm of black spirit stuff swirling through a version of Gower Holt even more dilapidated and decayed than the real one. Everything is... stretched... here. Walls are longer, and thinner. Pillars sag, ceilings arch and twist. Every substance, every surface, is in a constant and eternal state of collapse.

In the time it takes for Ella to let out one bloodcurdling scream, the characters are on the wrong side of the Shroud that separates the world of the living from the land of the dead.

Ella looks different here. The storm that swirls around and emanates from her pulls at her, turning the stuff of her spirit into tendrils and shreds that float like ink in water. Her pain's tearing her apart as surely as it tore a hole in the real world.

The Other Ghosts

Rowena, Henry, and Electra (unless she's passing a quiet, solitary evening in her mausoleum) couldn't care less about the fate of the characters. They've got their own goals, just as they always have. They're nearby though, and if the characters ask for their advice they provide it.

Henry insists that the only thing the characters can do is run from Ella: she feels the same as Rowena, just as warped and devoted to her own grief and want. She won't stop, he insists. She won't find peace, or be calm, or be restored to herself. Incidentally, he'd still like them to take him with them, please.

Rowena is confident that the only way to deal with Ella is to kill her. She doesn't like the idea: she's threatened by Ella's power, and she doesn't enjoy fair fights. She'll lend the Staff to any efforts the characters make to fight Ella, but she only gets involved herself if she sees an advantage, such as an opportunity to strike Ella while she's distracted by the characters.

Electra advises the characters to turn Ella on Rowena and force them into battle, killing two birds with one stone. Then she leaves. Her mausoleum is safe, and she can enter and leave it in spite of the sigil on the doorway. She'll only assist the hunters against Rowena if they threaten her Fetter.

Strike A Final Blow

It's time for an Initiative roll.

In the Shadowlands, the characters can interact with Ella as though they were all beings of solid matter. Ella still can't die without destroying one of her Fetters, but the characters can tear her substance apart in a way that will take a long time to reform.

Player vs. Player

There's a chance the characters, and their players, will have differing opinions on how to handle Ella. Some may want to save her, others destroy her. In an ideal world such conflict would stay strictly in character but that doesn't always happen. Check in and make sure players are all comfortable and there's no out of character resentment. If you suspect there is, even if the players won't say so, step out of character and discuss how to resolve the scene to everyone's satisfaction. If you can't find a resolution, fade to black. No one's sure what happened to Ella: the building started to collapse and the entire group had to shift focus to looking for an exit. Cut to Scene 10.

Yes, this takes away players' agency, but that's better than a bitter argument over a game.

Unlike most prior combat scenes, in this one the characters are fighting someone who wants to kill them and doesn't mind if she's destroyed in the process. Ella isn't going to surrender or back down, but that doesn't mean the characters have to fight to the death.

Rowena vs. Ella: Rowena stays nearby to watch the confrontation in case there's an opportunity to strike. "It's her fault" is one of the few arguments Ella will listen to. The characters can sic Ella on Rowena, buying themselves a chance to escape. Their fight rages behind the characters as they leave.

Subdual: Henry's not strictly right that killing Ella is the only way to end the threat she poses. Physically subduing her causes the storm to lull. The characters can leave, or make one final attempt to bring Ella peace. The difference between this scene and previous attempts is that subduing her interrupts her momentum in a way the characters have previously been unable to do. If they wait until she wakes up, she might listen to them. Helping her accept her fate requires a group Charisma + Empathy roll (Difficulty 8, 6 successes). The characters can burn Willpower and use any other advantages they have to increase their chance of success.

A restrained, calm Ella is exactly the opportunity Rowena has been looking for: she attacks Ella while she's incapable of fighting back. The characters can either let Rowena destroy Ella or take the opportunity to run.

To the Death: The characters don't have to fight to the death, but they *can*.

Death is Not the End

What happens to a living person if they're murdered by a ghost in the Shadowlands? Unsurprisingly, it's murky. While they're in the Shadowlands, the characters can take a huge amount of punishment: they can heal bashing or lethal damage by spending a point of Willpower for each box they wish to clear. When they're out of Willpower, they're destroyed.

Unfortunately, dead characters can't *leave* the Shadowlands. Don't tell the players this unless they ask, in which case an Intelligence + Occult roll (Difficulty 6) is enough to confirm the truth. Once the characters know, let them make their choices accordingly.

The Way Home

Neither Rowena nor Ella can get the characters out of the Shadowlands: They're going to have to do that themselves. Even if they've calmed Ella, a huge amount of damage has been done to Gower Holt and the house is dangerous, though less so than if she's still raging. Move on to **Scene 10: The Only Way Out Is Through**.

Scene 10: The Only Way Out Is Through (20 minutes)

Ella's repeated acts of violence wreak major damage on the house. It's coming down around the characters. As dangerous as this is, it's ten times worse in the Shadowlands. The characters have to find a way back to the world of the living through an obstacle course of environmental hazards.

Spirit Guides

The characters either need to find a way out on their own, or plead with a ghost to help them. The ghosts, as always, have their own requests.

Electra will show the characters to an exit if, and only if, they destroy Rowena. If Rowena's already out of action, Electra wants them to save her books.

Rowena is in a desperate position: she needs the house, and it's falling down around her. She'll help the characters back to the other side of the Shroud if they can promise they'll do everything in their power to save the building, or have it authentically rebuilt with as much of the original materials as possible. Realistically, there's not much they can do about that (though Anna does have some influence in the town council), but with a Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (Difficulty 6, 3 successes), Rowena believes them.

Failing Forward: If the characters fail, Rowena believes them for the time being, but her suspicions grow

as the characters get closer to leaving. When it's time for them to go, she insists on keeping one of them with her as a hostage. If one or more of the characters is dead, that problem might solve itself.

Henry is in the same position as ever; if he has a body, or is embodied in an object, he needs to get himself out of the Shadowlands just as much as the characters do. If he doesn't yet have one... those are his terms. Give him a body. Here in the Shadowlands, he doesn't need a whole ritual, just permission.

Ella, even if she's still in action, isn't an option. She'd prefer it if the characters didn't survive and she's got nothing to lose.

Other Options

The characters aren't reliant on the ghosts of Gower Holt. There are other ways out. Electra's books or Laure's Aunt Ilse might guide them to an exit. In the absence of any other strategy, you can resort to a character hearing voices calling from the other side of the Shroud: more emergency services personnel looking for them, and possibly Officer Guest. In the latter case, tell the characters that based on everything they know, the Shroud must be paper thin to hear sounds across it.

If you'd rather not be so heavy-handed, accept any reasonably plausible suggestion the characters come up with for an exit. Front door? Sure. That cellar window? As good as any other. Kick a hole in the wall... why not?

Shadowlands Obstacles

Gower Holt looks different on this side of the Shroud. It's larger, its corridors twist and turn even more, and once the characters have found an exit, they still have to make their way to it in one piece. The space outside the house isn't woodland. It has no relationship with real world geography: it's a limitless, lightless void with the occasional whisper of movement from within. They need the right way out.

The right way is, simply put, the part of the house where the Shroud is weakest. It's the cellar, directly above the crypt where a number of Gowers are buried. Characters who explore the cellar thoroughly might know this, but if they don't there are numerous ways to learn it (see **Spirit Guides** and **Other Options**, p. XX).

Tailor the group's trials to how damaged they are (and how much time you have left) but choose from:

Henry's Last Act: If the characters still haven't given in to Henry's pleas to house him in a mortal shell, he sees one final chance at revenge. If Rowena or Ella are still looking for the characters, he calls one, or both, of them to their location. They now have a matter of minutes to leave

the house. Any confusion or delays means at least one Spectre is on their heels when they get close to the door.

Unsupervised Staff: Without Rowena's iron will holding them to obedience, the Staff are scared and dangerous. They blame the living intruders for the collapse of the house (and everything else that's transpired tonight). They ambush the group around staircases, in twisting corridors, and wherever seems most advantageous.

If your group has a high tolerance for danger and tragedy, have the Staff attempt to defenestrate them, plunging them into the void outside the house.

The House Falls Down: Ella's storm and any fighting in the Shadowlands have left the house in terrible shape. In the world of the living it's falling to pieces and in the Shadowlands it's even worse. Floors collapse under the characters, ceilings fall above them, and chunks of falling debris can end their lives as surely as Gower Holt's ghosts. Call for Dexterity + Athletics checks (Difficulty 6, 3 successes) to avoid taking damage as the characters traverse the house (1 bashing per degree of difference). If Ella did major damage in **Scene 5** (p. XX), the damage is lethal.

If the characters dawdle, this is a useful tool to get them moving.

The Door: Whichever exit the characters are aiming for (the crypt, or one of your/their choosing), it's blocked. It requires five successes on a single, not extended, Strength + Athletics roll (Difficulty 6) to shove it open, and there's room for two characters to work together on it. A battering ram improvised from chunks of Shadowlands masonry and woodwork reduces the Difficulty to 5.

If the characters aren't under pressure, they achieve this feat in a few tries, without rolling. If Rowena or Ella are hostile and pursuing them, it's another story. The rest of the group must distract the Spectre(s) somehow while their friends bash open the door.

Goodbye Friends: If any characters are deceased, it's time for goodbyes. Give the characters a few minutes as the

house continues to quake and crumble: remind them time is fleeting, and hasten them onwards. Death moves at its own pace, and can't be mastered by sentiment.

Epilogue

The remaining characters stumble out into the snow – falling more softly now – and into the bright lights of police cars and ambulances. Gower Holt is severely damaged, maybe not even standing anymore... and the characters have a lot of explaining to do.

Let the curtain fall there.

Continuing the Story

If the group wants to continue this story, there are numerous opportunities.

If Ella or Rowena still exist, they plague attempts to redevelop Gower Holt and, if or when the property is reopened as a bed and breakfast (or for any other purpose) the Spectre injures and kills visitors or residents. The characters know exactly what the problem is, and might be the only people who can help.

With Rowena dead, the Staff might regain their independence. They've spent years and in some cases decades in service to a Spectre, but if they rediscover their connections to people and places in the town of Ironbridge, they could be the cause of innumerable hauntings throughout the area, some poignant and others dangerous.

Even without these direct consequences, the characters' experiences shape them: they've seen the Shadowlands and lived to tell of it, witnessed the terrible power of a ghost poisoned and warped by their passions, and contributed to the death of a dear friend. The thin and permeable nature of the Shroud, the dangers of problems left unsolved, and the burden of guilt are all strong motifs to carry forward into later stories.

Anna Barker

Anna's the founder and leader of the Ironbridge Paranormal Society. She moved to the town as a young doctor in the 1990s, and became fascinated by the folklore and ghost stories of the area, which seemed to have a higher concentration of unusual tales than most places. From owl-people, to devils, to hauntings, the whole area was steeped in history. It became Anna's hobby, then her fascination, and when she retired from medicine a few years ago, she founded the society to carry on her research and surround herself with kindred spirits.

Anna's interest isn't purely academic. Somewhere along the way, she started to believe many of the phenomena she read about. Once she started believing, it seemed only sensible to learn to defend herself. Anna's a practicing occultist, with some serious practical knowledge. Yes, she had to make a wand from her mother's fingerbone when the old lady died, but, being a doctor, Anna's very comfortable with mortal remains. She's never had to put her skills to the test, but she's grimly excited to try.

Anna has been trying to get into Gower Holt for years. She dimly remembers it being inhabited when she arrived in town, and why it became empty and stayed that way is an intriguing mystery. No one in town seems to want to talk about the house or the Gower family, at least not to her. Thirty years isn't enough to make her a true local, apparently.

Anna's proud of the IPS and all its members and has a special soft spot for Laure Mayer, whom she fully expects to take over leadership one day.

Roleplaying Anna: You're fearless. The supernatural is real, but you've got the wisdom, experience and tools to face it. In fact, you regard it as your duty to solve supernatural problems: most people aren't equipped for it, you are, and therefore it's a public service. Admittedly, it's a service that aligns with your natural curiosity. You've a dry, dark sense of humor and though you don't mean to you can use it to hurt others when you're under pressure. You're composed and calm (if a little sharp) in all situations, but physical violence scares you: you've seen all the ways the human body can break and you'd rather avoid experiencing them yourself.

Numina: Mortal Necromancy

Roll: Stamina + Occult (Difficulty 7, 6 if written in human blood).

Modifiers: Anna must have her tools (a notebook of spells, wand made of her mother's fingerbones) to use this Numen.

Cost: One level of bashing damage per level of the power unless otherwise stated. If Anna fails to activate a power when her Willpower is 3 or lower, she is overwhelmed by the energies she attempted to control, and suffers auditory hallucinations for the next day (+1 Difficulty to Perception rolls).

Duration: One scene or hour.



Justin Grady

High school athlete, carefree party animal, all around rising star. That was Justin's life. Then it wasn't. Driving drunk, he ran his car straight into a tree. People say he's lucky to be alive. Technically, he died on the operating table during the surgery that followed. And that couple of minutes before the doctors brought him back changed his life more than the accident itself.

The accident was five years ago: Physically, he's fully recovered. Emotionally, he's never been the same. He's been preoccupied with mortality ever since. The land of the dead is so much closer than people realize. He senses ghosts, even if he doesn't see them, and it's hard to think about anything else.

Justin lost a lot of friends, and his family keeps him at a distance, but the Ironbridge Paranormal Society gives him a group of people who understand him — or at least believe him. He throws himself into searching for ghosts because the whole subject is like a sore tooth he can't stop prodding. Facing death is the only way he feels alive.

Ella, Justin's older sister, joined the society to keep an eye on him, but quickly got even more interested in the paranormal than Justin is. He feels responsible for her, and very protective.

Roleplaying Justin: You take life very seriously, and that makes people uncomfortable. You're alert and watchful, picking up small details and sometimes fixating on them. When others are laughing, you're rarely lighthearted enough to join in. You're preoccupied with ghosts. What could be more important or worth talking about than that? You approach danger with a fatalistic calm: everyone dies eventually.

Numina: Shadow

Roll: Manipulation + Stealth (Difficulty 7, -1 Difficulty if Player Character is in possession of some sort of prism or reflective device.)

Modifiers: N/A

Cost: One Willpower per level

Duration: two minutes per success



Laure Mayer

Laure's a psychology professor at the local community college. She got into the discipline specifically because she was interested in parapsychology, only to gradually accept that it's no longer treated as a serious discipline for research. She ended up focusing on child psychology and largely losing interest in the profession. With student loans still unpaid, she's not in a position to go looking for a new career path.

She wouldn't do so anyway. Her focus is elsewhere. The entire reason she's interested in the science of the paranormal is because of her own personal haunting. Laure never met her great aunt Ilse, who died very soon after the family moved to the USA from Belgium, decades before Laure was born. Ilse is deeply interested in her descendant, however. She's watched over Laure since she was a child and while it's intrusive and uncomfortable (morality lectures from a deceased great aunt make for uncomfortable teenage years), Ilse's warnings have saved Laure from danger numerous times.

Laure joined the IPS hoping for a better understanding of her guardian spook and her nature. Over the years, Ilse seems increasingly given to dark moods and more like a Xerox of herself, more and more reliant on a few defining traits (her high regard for honesty; her love of classical music; her intense dislike of animals).

Laure hasn't told the group about her personal ghost. She doesn't want Ilse exploited and turned into a spectacle or an experiment. She's hoping that by exploring Gower Holt and finding some other ghosts, she might get a better understanding of her own haunting, and figure out whether Ilse will one day put her in danger.

Roleplaying Laure: Be the voice of reason. After Anna, you're the oldest member of the group and you're the one with the most to lose if things go wrong here. Act by-the-book, break as few laws as possible, and weigh up the pros and cons of every decision. If you need to speak to Ilse – and if things go wrong, you will – find somewhere private to do so. You trust and value your Antecessor's advice, but you're not naïve; she has her own motivations, just like every other intelligent human being, dead or alive.



Madison Clark

Madison has spent their life up to this point doing what they're told. First by their parents, who had high expectations of their only child, then by demanding professors at their expensive college, then by the controlling boyfriend they landed on when they snapped and dropped out of school. The supernatural, in books, TV and on laughably outdated websites has always been their escape, their private rebellion.

Madison's new in Ironbridge. They moved here because it's cheap and a long way from their family and ex, whom they never want to see again. This is a fresh start for Madison: they're enrolled in the local community college, finally finishing off their Psychology degree at the age of 25, no one has any expectations of them, and they're free to be who they want to be, not having to live up to other people's vision of them.

The flip side of that is that Madison is alone here. Making friends as an adult is hard, so they gravitated naturally to people with a shared interest: the paranormal. Madison's a huge fan of ghost hunting shows, and the ad in a local coffee shop for the Ironbridge Paranormal Society seemed like it would introduce them to kindred spirits. They expected a lot more ghost stories and a lot less breaking and entering but they're sticking around for Zoe and Justin, who seem like the kind of cool, extroverted people Madison aspires to be.

Roleplaying Madison: You're soft spoken and you dislike conflict, but you're not shy. You go with the flow for the most part — you're trying to make friends here, after all — but if you think something's really wrong, you'll speak up. In fact, you're trying to get better at standing up for yourself. You have a kind heart and a lot of empathy for others. You're easily spooked, jumping at shadows and sudden noises, but you try not to let others see it and play it off like it's no big deal. You're also bigger and stronger than the rest of the group and you see it as your responsibility to do the 'heavy lifting.'



WORLD OF DARKNESS

GHOST HUNTERS

Name: Madison Clark
 Player: _____
 Chronicle: The Longest Night

Nature: Caregiver
 Demeanor: Follower
 Concept: People-pleasing outsider

Age: 25
 Sex: NB
 Organization: Ironbridge Paranormal Society

Physical

Strength _____ **●●●○○**
 Dexterity _____ **●●○○○**
 Stamina _____ **●●●○○**

Social

Charisma _____ **●●○○○**
 Manipulation _____ **●●○○○**
 Appearance _____ **●●○○○**

Mental

Perception _____ **●●●○○**
 Intelligence _____ **●●●○○**
 Wits _____ **●●○○○**

Talent

Alertness _____ **●●●○○**
 Athletics _____ **●●●○○**
 Awareness _____ **●●○○○**
 Brawl _____ **●●●○○**
 Empathy _____ **●●●○○**
 Expression _____ **○○○○○**
 Intimidation _____ **●●○○○**
 Leadership _____ **○○○○○**
 Persuasion _____ **○○○○○**
 Streetwise _____ **○○○○○**
 Subterfuge _____ **●●○○○**
 _____ **○○○○○**

Skills

Animal Ken _____ **○○○○○**
 Crafts _____ **○○○○○**
 Drive _____ **●○○○○**
 Etiquette _____ **●●○○○**
 Firearms _____ **●○○○○**
 Larceny _____ **○○○○○**
 Meditation _____ **○○○○○**
 Melee _____ **○○○○○**
 Performance _____ **●○○○○**
 Stealth _____ **○○○○○**
 Survival _____ **○○○○○**
 _____ **○○○○○**

Knowledge

Academics Psychology **●●○○○**
 Computer _____ **●○○○○**
 Enigmas _____ **○○○○○**
 Finance _____ **○○○○○**
 Investigation _____ **○○○○○**
 Law _____ **○○○○○**
 Medicine _____ **●●○○○**
 Occult _____ **○○○○○**
 Politics _____ **○○○○○**
 Science _____ **●●○○○**
 Technology _____ **○○○○○**
 _____ **○○○○○**

Advantages

Backgrounds

Relic _____ **●●●○○**
 Resources _____ **●●○○○**
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Merits & Flaws

Huge Size _____
 Scaredy-cat _____

Humanity

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○

Willpower

● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage
Flashlight	9	1B

Health

Bruised	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	-1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Injured	-1 <input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded	-2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Mauled	-2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Crippled	-5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Incapacitated	<input type="checkbox"/>

Experience

Virtues

Conscience _____ **●●●●●**
 Self-Control _____ **●●●○○**
 Courage _____ **●●○○○**

Attributes: 6/4/3 • Abilities: 11/7/4 • Backgrounds: 5 • Virtues: 7 • Freebie Points: 15 (7/5/2/1)

Michael Osei

Michael's a proud nerd. From the AV club, to ham radio, to building PCs (his current profession); technology is his comfort zone. When setting up gear, taking readings, and interpreting data, no one comes close to his level of skill. His other specialist subject is pop culture: comic books, TV, all kinds of trivia is his to command.

Without Michael, the Ironbridge Paranormal Society would just be a group of believers meeting to tell ghost stories. He's the one with the EMF meters, the ambient temperature monitors, and the recording equipment. He makes this a scientific process, not just a campfire story society. He's not super comfortable with breaking into buildings, even abandoned ones, and is nervous the group will get into serious trouble; on the other hand, he's not about to miss an opportunity to set up all his best tech and get a whole night of readings in a supposedly haunted house.

Michael's the IPS's resident sceptic. He doesn't buy into the idea of ghosts as the actual lingering spirits of the dead. Maybe people leave psychic impressions on a place, or electromagnetic fields that interact in strange ways with the human brain, but that's not the same thing as spirits of the dead.

Roleplaying Michael: You filter the world, and especially the supernatural, through a lens of pop culture. You don't fully believe in ghosts, ghouls or things that go bump in the night, though you keep that to yourself unless you feel like teasing your fellow club members; but even so the books you've read and the content you've consumed give you a wide field of reference to understand whatever's going on around you. You're blunt and you say what you're thinking, and you're easily frustrated by people who do otherwise. Oh, and you don't let other people fiddle with your expensive, easily damaged, tech.



Zoe Leung

Zoe's a local, and she's extremely over this small town. She's just turned 21 and she's out of here the first chance she gets. The only good things about Ironbridge happened hundreds of years ago, and she's spent the previous two years using the town's rich folklore to build up a popular blog and YouTube channel. It's the least Ironbridge owes her for two decades of stifling, conservative boredom.

The other members of the Ironbridge Paranormal Society aren't her idea of fun people to spend time with, being a bunch of nerds and skeptics, but club membership's useful in getting her into archives and locations she'd otherwise never get permission for. The only one she's really fond of is Michael: he's sweet and he knows his stuff.

Zoe's been talking to a professional crew of reality TV ghost hunters about joining them as an intern. They just want to see her in action first. Zoe's cynical about most things but she genuinely believes in ghosts and the TV crews who hunt them. She's seen ghosts, and she reads tarot: she knows there's more to the world than meets the eye.

Breaking into Gower Holt tonight was Zoe's idea. It's her demo reel. She's going to show the Spirit Chasers her full range: severe, scared, skilled – everything she has. She'll explore every corner of this spooky old place, uncovering secrets and capturing it all on film. If she gets a real ghost on camera, so much the better, but that's not a requirement.

Roleplaying Zoe: You're the smartest person in any room, but you know full well you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. You're sweet, cheerful, and eager to help. At least, you talk like you are. You manipulate people into doing what you want, usually succeeding in making them think it's their idea, and disregard instructions in order to follow your own leads and hunches. If you get bored, you'll do something, anything, to spice things up. You own your mistakes, but only with hindsight. You never, ever see them coming but you feel terrible on the rare occasions your screw-ups put someone else in a difficult position.

Numina: The Path of Divination

Roll: Perception + Occult (Difficulty 7).

Modifiers: +1 Difficulty to perform a Divination for others. Zoe must have a set of tarot cards to use this Numen.

Cost: N/A

Duration: A single revelation.



Appendix

Statistics for antagonists and creatures used throughout the scenario. An explanation of their Powers follows the profiles.

Rowena Gower, Spectral Matriarch

Rowena Gower is the venomous spider at the center of the web. A spiteful, cruel woman who murdered her husband for his money then was murdered by her own children in turn, Rowena's malevolent influence is responsible for a great deal of the Gower family's troubled history over the centuries.

She resents every living person, but especially the young: spoiled, ungrateful children intent on stealing the world and its pleasures from their elders. Rowena wants nothing more than murder; ending undeserving lives (and frivolous youths are all undeserving, by definition) is the only thing that brings her satisfaction. She coexists with Henry Gower only because she pretends not to notice him: he's not family and not fit to be part of the Staff.

Her existence is tied inextricably to the house: were she to be banished to the Shadowlands once and for all, Gower Holt would fall. If the house were demolished, Rowena would go with it... but not quietly.

Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5; Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Intimidation 3, Melee 3, Occult 2, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 4

Willpower: 8

Powers: Creep ••••, Malevolence •••, Unseen Hand ••

Special: When Rowena feels threatened, up to three of the Staff appear at her side, obedient to her will.

Fetter: Gower Holt, in its entirety.

Henry Gower, the Last Scion

Henry died alone in Gower Holt in 1994, aged thirty-eight years old. He was a distant cousin of the main Gower line who inherited the house by default when his great aunt Morrigan passed away. There was simply nobody else with any familial connection left to inherit. An alcoholic whose family had disowned him, Henry was grateful for the home. He didn't expect the debts that came with it.

He sold some of the house's contents to feed his habit and keep the lights on – antique furniture, first edition books, even the silver – but Rowena didn't take kindly to that. She pushed him down the stairs and broke his neck. The Staff carried his body up to the house's attic to decompose, and he was never found. He spends his time hiding from Rowena, convinced that she'll either destroy him or induct him into The Staff.

Henry's ghost lingered after death courtesy of his profound regret at never achieving anything, but now his singular desire is to escape from Gower Holt, and Rowena. Possession of a person or object sounds ideal but he has little idea how to go about it.

Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 1, Law 2, Melee 2, Occult 2, Politics 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Technology 2

Willpower: 7

Powers: Unseen Hand •

Fetter: His mortal remains

Electra Gower, the Witch Beyond the Shroud

Electra Gower is one of Rowena's many descendants and every bit as unpleasant as the matriarch herself. She died at Rowena's hand when Rowena deemed her a threat; she knew of Rowena's presence and sought to exorcise her. As a sorceress and a head of the family in her own right she proved too powerful to be coopted into the Staff after she died.

Electra maintains her independence, staying largely in her mausoleum in the grounds, as she waits for an opportunity to strike at Rowena.

Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 1, Law 2, Melee 2, Occult 4, Politics 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Technology 2

Willpower: 7

Powers: Unseen Hand ••, Malevolence •••

Special: Electra can slip into a mortal body at the moment of its death, without a roll.

Fetter: Her books.

The Staff, Ghostly Servants

Rowena is an avaricious and possessive being, and she holds other spirits to her like objects. Her own family and many of the servants linger as spirits. Some are self-aware and a few even remember some scant details of their iden-

ties but all are Rowena's puppets and remain so until someone can free them.

Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1; Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Intimidation 3, Melee 3, Occult 2, Stealth 4, Subterfuge 3

Willpower: 3

Powers: Malevolence ••, Unseen Hand ••

Fetter: None. Rowena expertly severs all ties, replacing them with fealty to her.

Ella Grady, Newly Dead

Ella only died a few hours ago, and she hasn't processed that she's no longer alive. She wants to make contact with her friends, finish exploring Gower Holt, and get out of here so she can go see her folks for Christmas. Grandpa's getting on in years, and this might be the last holiday with the whole family together.

Her Shadow is a destructive force of Chaos, already whipping up a minor tempest around the house to bring a few more victims down with Ella.

Once she realizes her situation, Ella wants revenge on Rowena, Henry, and Gower Holt itself. She's newly reborn, her Shadow is loud, and she's out of control.

Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Computer 2, Empathy 3, Enigmas 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Occult 2, Politics 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Willpower: 5

Special: Ella — or more accurately, her Shadow — has an uncanny ability to stir the energies of the Shadowlands, creating Tempests that manifest on both sides of the Shroud.

Fetter: Justin Grady

Ghostly Powers

Unseen Hand

A ghost does not possess a physical body and cannot lift or throw objects. This power allows them to interact with the physical world using the power of their mind. Dot ratings reflect the weight they can lift, move, or otherwise animate once per turn. To use this power, roll Wits + Awareness, expending 1 point of Willpower per attempt. Successes equal the number of turns the wraith can affect an object.

Unseen Hand Levels

- One pound/one-half kilogram
- 20 pounds/10 kilograms
- 200 pounds/100 kilograms
- 500 pounds/250 kilograms
- 1,000 pounds/500 kilograms

Malevolence

Angry ghosts possess the raw power of their emotions and use that to affect the living. A Spectre with Malevolence can plague a victim and force them to experience varying degrees of bad luck and catastrophic accidents. Roll Manipulation + Intimidation as a contested roll against the target's Willpower. While this power doesn't necessitate a Willpower expenditure, if the wraith chooses to spend a point of Willpower they may add a die to their pool, for a maximum of three dice. The duration and threat level varies depending on the dot value.

- A victim suffers minor inconveniences such as tripping on a crack to stub their toe or saying the wrong thing at the right time. Mechanically, the Storyteller reflects this mishap by adding a +1 Difficulty to dice pools relevant to the situation. A stubbed toe might increase Athletics Difficulties by 1, whereas awkward social interactions might increase Etiquette Difficulties by 1.
- The afflicted's bad luck is no longer merely annoying, and their injuries are sustained. They dump water all over their laptop or step on a rusty nail. The Difficulty increases to +2 for the duration of the effect.
- The victim's misfortune takes a turn for the worse. They might get into a car accident, lose

their job, or contract Legionnaires' disease. The Difficulty increases to +3 for the duration of the effect.

••••

The victim now suffers from major catastrophes and chronic illnesses. The Difficulty increases to +3 for the duration of the effect. In addition, the victim subtracts one die from associated dice pools during appropriate moments in the story.

•••••

The afflicted's misfortune reaches epic proportions. For the duration of the wraith's ire, the victim cannot do anything right. The simplest movement can break bones and shatter glass. The Difficulty increases to +4 for the duration of the effect, and the victim subtracts two dice from any relevant pools.

The duration of the wraith's Malevolence is determined by the number of successes achieved during the contested roll.

One success	The victim's next action
Two successes	One scene
Three successes	One day
Four successes	One week
Five+ successes	One month

Creep

Ghosts scare the living by manipulating shadows and sounds in the places they haunt. Varying levels of this power give ghosts the ability to frighten and terrorize victims. To inflict this power, spend a point of Willpower and roll Wits + Occult. Each success increases the duration and area of the effect up to a maximum of 5 turns and a 5-foot radius around the ghost.

The Storyteller may, at their discretion, have the victim roll Wits + Survival against the ghost's Willpower rating. If they fail, the character loses a turn out of sheer fright.

- Shadows lengthen, stairs creak, and the air chills. The victim's Difficulty rating on their next action increases by 1.
- Shadows move, lights flicker, and the air is noticeably cool. The victim's Difficulty rating on their next action increases by 2.
- Darkness snuffs out any visible lights, the walls shake, and the victim can see their own breath. The victim's Difficulty rating on their next action increases by 3.

- As above. In addition, the ghost can audibly shriek and produce minor illusions like bleeding walls or beetles crawling on the ground. If the ghost has possessed a victim, it can make their skin appear to rot. The victim's Difficulty rating on their next action increases by 3, and the victim removes one die from their pool.
- As above. The ghost can produce a major illusion, like the front of a haunted house screaming in terror, a room changing size and shape, or rivers of blood. If the ghost has possessed a victim, it can unnaturally "turn" their head around and levitate their body. The victim's Difficulty rating on their next action increases by 3, and the victim removes two dice from their pool.

# Successes	Duration	Radius of Effect
1 success	1 turn	1 foot
2 successes	2 turns	2 feet
3 successes	3 turns	3 feet
4 successes	4 turns	4 feet
5+ successes	5 turns	5 feet

Player Character Powers, Merits, and Flaws

The following traits appear on the Ghost Hunters' character sheets and are elaborated upon here. The costs and durations of each are listed in the character biographies.

Mortal Necromancy

- **Fear Stave:** When written on an object and thrown at the feet of a ghost, the ghost will cower in fear as it recognizes the void inside of you. You have a -2 Difficulty for any Intimidation or Subterfuge rolls against the ghost in question.

- **Prayer Stave:** When written on the magician's body, the caster can see, hear, and speak to any ghost in their vicinity.

Shadow

- **Cultivate Shadow:** By shifting sounds or shadows around you, you may distract others, making them see images out of the corner of their eyes, or hear murmuring in the distance. By using this power on yourself you may

"blur your edges," making it harder to recognize you for what you are (add a -1 Difficulty to any Intimidation or Stealth rolls). This Numen may affect a single human-sized object.

- **Bend Shadow:** You may bend or intensify shadows, sucking light from a room and baffling sound, reducing the Difficulty of Intimidation and Stealth rolls by 2.

The Path of Divination

- **Coins:** The Psychic interprets signs or warnings about the state of her immediate circumstances; the player can ask a simple yes or no question of the Storyteller and get an answer about the subject in question.

- **Cups:** The Psychic eliminates possible negative outcomes by comparing them beforehand. The player may ask the Storyteller, who represents the Psychic's guiding metaphysical entity, for information to help determine their character's best choice for a simple decision. The player asks a question such as "where's the oak chest?" The Storyteller then provides some amount of information in response which will help the player decide.

The Storyteller should consider several factors when answering such a question. What is the intent of the Psychic asking the question? Are they asking which decision is safest? Are they looking for the quickest route to their goal? Which decision will have the greatest impact upon the current state of the chronicle?

Fate is not always kind to those who attempt to divine it. It might be that it is the character's destiny to find the oak chest in the haunted mansion where they will be attacked by a vicious spirit, but that may be the path to determining the location of the haunting where it resides.

Merits

Acute Hearing (-2 Difficulty on Perception rolls reliant on hearing).

Ashen (you get an unsettling feeling when ghosts are around you).

Concentration (you are calm under pressure. You don't suffer penalties from distractions, such as loud noises).

Huge Size (you're over six feet tall, and 300lbs. You're big, strong, and you can take a lot of punishment. You have an extra Bruised health level and may also gain bonuses to avoid being knocked down, push objects, opened barred doors etc. at the Storyteller's discretion.)

Pop Culture King (Once per scene you can ask the Storyteller for some cinematic reasoning to understand a situation outside your experience. They do not have to give you the answer to your question or the magic "key" to

fix the situation, but they should give you some advice to move forward in an advantageous manner).

Flaws

Impatient (make a Self-control roll, Difficulty 6, when others delay, or go off on your own)

Scaredy-cat (you're easily spooked. You jump at shadows, gasp, or squeak involuntarily, and that makes it hard to creep around. All Stealth rolls have a +1 Difficulty.)

Shy (you're bad in large groups of people and have +2 Difficulty on social rolls to interact with strangers, rising to +3 if you're the center of attention in a large group).

Soft-Hearted (you can't watch people suffer or be hurt unless you succeed on a Willpower roll at Difficulty 8).

Tech Zealot (You believe your equipment over your own senses, and your equipment isn't always on point. When using technology to find paranormal activity you are at a +2 Difficulty for all Alertness and Investigation rolls.)

THE LONGEST NIGHT

How many times must we witness a hapless group of aspiring ghost hunters spend a night in a “haunted” house before we accept it for the cheap source of jump scares and bottled hysteria that it is?

These places house no ghosts. These people know nothing of the undead. These “ghost hunters” do not understand real fear.

Well, now they’re coming to my house, and I feel it’s high time someone put a damn good fright into the impetuous living.

Who knows? Maybe before the night’s out, they’ll join the ranks of the dead, and keep me permanent company.

The Longest Night includes:

- A condensed version of the **Storyteller System** for use in any **World of Darkness 20th Anniversary** game.
- A full chronicle taking ghost hunters from their arrival at an old, haunted house, through to their departure — as living or dead — the morning after. Perfect for a one-shot or convention play.
- A selection of ready-made characters, all playable straight from the pages of this book.

